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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT An Example of Soviet "Thurs"
Soviet Civilian Attitudes

50X1-HUM

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1. The recent glowing descriptions of Soviet life brings to mind a story told [redacted] in the fall of 1949 by a Soviet worker in Minsk [redacted] detailed to construction work on a workers' dormitory. There were very few guards in the work area since there was a guarded barbed wire fence surrounding the entire construction compound. As we were working adjacent to the Soviet laborers we were able to speak to them freely. Actually the workers were quite friendly toward us and were inclined to speak more frankly to us than to each other.
2. This worker happened to have been working on the repair of the railroad station in Minsk in 1946, at the time some Western journalists were being taken on an "inspection trip" of the USSR. The people of Minsk were literally starving and for the most part were dressed in rags. The train was to arrive shortly after noon so the Party propaganda men began putting their plan into operation early that morning. To begin with, the entire station area was roped off from the public and only trusted party members and political "reliables" were admitted. Brand new refreshment stands were set up and manned by the Party workers.
3. A fairly large group of Party functionaries had gathered by the time the visitors' train arrived and were on hand to deliver a carefully rehearsed "spontaneous" demonstration of friendship. The journalists detained and after waving back to a group of smiling "peasant" girls went to the refreshment stand. Here they joined the "Soviet workers" who were buying rolls and wine for lunch. The rolls were large and reportedly were sold for five rubles each. At that time one kilogram of bread, when available, sold for 5 rubles on the black market. A smiling Party man dressed as a worker joined the party. He was eating a lunch of caviar and wine, which he no doubt tried to convince the visitors was standard fare for the working man. It was reported that this man had actually put dirt and grease on his hands to cover up the fact that he had not been working with them.

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4. After the train had gone the refreshment stands were torn down and the crowd of "workers" left. The worker who told [] this story spat on the ground and repeated that the real workers of Minsk were starving at that time. 50X1-HUM
5. The male Soviet civilian workers were usually friendly but the females who shared the men's tasks in construction work always remained more hostile []. The members of the Communist youth groups were also actively hostile. All of the workers would have to attend various "meetings" where they were duly propagandized. It was quite noticeable that the civilians were much less friendly [] after the meetings than before, but that this attitude would disappear in a few days and their fairly frank complaints would begin once more. One Minskovite worker, commenting on two KVD guards who had walked past [] whispered "There go the lords of our land." 50X1-HUM
6. Once while on a clean-up detail in Cherepovets during late 1946 a civilian worker approached a group of [] POW's who were also carrying rubble. He told of having been a captain in the Soviet Army, being disabled and given a medical discharge. He complained of his inadequate treatment in a state hospital and summed it up as follows: "You prisoners are better off than we are. You at least have some hope of someday leaving this country." 50X1-HUM
7. Despite the complaints, Soviet propaganda has played upon Soviet gullibility to propagandize a devoted core of civil servants. Once during the summer of 1949 [] taken into the country on [] to work in the fields of a huge estate. The house and grounds of the estate were surrounded by a wall and the wall was surrounded by a barbed wire fence. The gate to the grounds was kept closed and guarded at all times. The estate was luxurious looking from the outside. It was the summer residence of the State Minister for Byelorussian SSR. There was a Soviet civil service worker directing our activities on the farm. He was quite friendly []
- [] He explained [] who was living there, in naive but glowing detail. He explained that the security measures were to protect the Minister. [] asked [] why any man elected to office by a unanimous vote needed such protection and why it was that the secret police must stop all traffic and clear the streets in Minsk when the Minister's huge car was driven through the city. Without anger or sarcasm he explained [] as he would to a child that those precautions were necessary to protect the Minister from foreign saboteurs. These foreign saboteurs constituted a real threat in the mind of this sincere bureaucrat. He was a man of about 35 years and was clearly neither a Party hack nor an opportunist but a very sincere Communist who had completely swallowed and digested the Party line. 50X1-HUM

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